



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
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December 13, 2006

TO: Washington State Board of Health Members

FROM: Dr. Patricia Ortiz

SUBJECT: PROMOTING HEALTHY EATING IN RESTAURANTS

Background and Summary

Nutrition has long been a focus of the Board. Activities related to nutrition are included in the Board's strategic plan under the goal of improving health by promoting healthy behaviors. In Washington State, obesity rates more than doubled between 1990 (9%) and 2004 (22%). Currently, more than half of all Washington adults are either overweight or obese. The percentage of adults with obesity-related risk factors varies by age group, sex, household income, education, and race/ethnicity. A number of factors contribute to obesity including physical inactivity, poor nutrition, and food insecurity.

Effectively addressing this issue will require action on many fronts. Clearly, individual efforts to get and stay healthy are an important part of the mix. But to support people in their efforts, our environment will also need to change. We need to continue to work together to make changes in policy at the state, regional, and local levels to improve the environments where we live, learn, work, and play.

Americans continue to eat most of their meals at home, but they are dining out more frequently (an average of about four times a week). In 1970, the food-away-from-home sector captured about a quarter of total food spending. In 1995, about 40 percent of the food budget was spent on food away from home. As consumers have become more concerned with healthy eating, the restaurant industry has responded with a variety of initiatives. Today we will learn more about some of these. We may want to periodically revisit activities centered on helping Washington State residents eat healthy foods as obesity is an issue that will not be resolved in a short period of time.

Board Action Recommended

None.